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# Regional Council Activity Report

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May 1, 2001

Briefing to Member Agencies from Executive Director James M. Bourey



## Executive Director's Report

As we continue to analyze the information coming out of the series of expert panel forums held in February and March, we see more and more clearly the changes we will face over the next two decades.

The purpose of the series was to look at the critical elements that may lead to changes in travel behavior, land use, work habits, lifestyle, and technology – all of which could have a significant effect on the infrastructure and transportation system needs 40 years from now.

Although we discussed some of these major themes in our last report, there were many issues raised during the five half-day sessions that warrant further discussion.

For example, during the Demographic and Social Change forum, experts predicted that population growth is likely to be faster than current Department of Economic Security (DES) forecasts. The current DES prediction is that there will be about 6.3 million people in the Valley by the year 2040. But even if historic growth rates decline by 20 percent over each of the next four decades, we could end up with 7.8 million people instead. This difference could have significant ramifications for our transportation infrastructure and other land use decisions, and must be taken into account as we develop our new transportation plan.

Another major demographic change in the future will be a more diverse population. By 2040, or sooner, minorities will represent 40 percent of the population. If minority groups continue a historical tradition of having larger families than non-minorities, it follows that higher birth rates may occur. This could increase the school age population faster than projected, create a higher demand for public transit, and perhaps lead to an increased need for affordable housing – all of which will have their own impact on transportation needs.

In discussions on the New Economy, participants heard that people are the most important “raw material” of the future. In the New Economy, workers

will become more concerned about their quality of life, and will choose to live in cities where a “sense of place” is important. Employers will have to be more flexible in providing alternative work arrangements, such as teleworking and flexible work hours, which will also affect travel patterns.

In looking at land use and urban development, some contradictions were found – such as the fact that most citizens dislike both sprawl AND density. Experts found that discussions of urban sprawl are often divorced from reality, with people failing to understand that their personal lifestyle choices have a direct impact on growth.

Other land use findings included the need for a better balance between housing and jobs; that most growth continues to occur along the urban edge; and that changing the urban form is a long-term process.

Our transportation experts confirmed that increased congestion will be inevitable. Commute patterns will continue to evolve to more suburb-to-suburb travel, and freeway speeds during peak periods will decline.

Again, these are just a few of many ideas expressed during the forums that give us a much clearer picture of future transportation needs. Our next step is to hold a series of focus groups throughout the region to help develop values, goals and objectives in the areas of transportation and regional development. The findings that come out of the focus groups and forums will help us develop a solid policy foundation for the creation of the new Regional Transportation Plan, and we look forward to the continued discoveries this process will bring us along the way.



## **Regional Council Meeting Report for April 25, 2001**

### **MAG Makes CANAMEX Corridor Recommendation**

The Maricopa Association of Governments has made its final recommendation for the CANAMEX Corridor, marking the last designated segment of the trade route extending from Canada to Mexico through the western United States.

The MAG recommendation for designation includes (entering from the southern part of the region) Interstate 8 west to State Route 85, north on SR 85 to Interstate 10, west on I-10 to an alignment in the general vicinity of

Wickenburg/Vulture Mine Road, north to a planned Wickenburg Bypass, and the Wickenburg Bypass northwest to State Route 93.

In designating the corridor, MAG studied a variety of connecting routes between Interstate 10 and Wickenburg, including Loop 303, the Sun Valley Parkway, Eagle Eye Road, and the Wickenburg/Vulture Mine Road alignment. Evaluation criteria for the designation included safety, cost, travel time, length, level of service, access to freight terminals, constructability, environmental impacts, major community impacts, and impacts on minority communities and low income populations. The next step will be to have the MAG recommendation included in federal legislation designating the Corridor.

**For more information contact Chris Voigt, MAG Senior Engineer, (602) 254-6300.**



## **Information Items**

### **Regional Council Hears Update on Elderly Mobility Initiative**

The “Age Wave” is coming – are we ready? Research shows that the baby boom generation is about to transform into the largest elderly population in human history, changing how we live in almost every way. One critical impact will be in the transportation arena, as Regional Council members heard during an update on the MAG Elderly Mobility Initiative. The Initiative seeks to identify future travel trends of seniors and to plan for their future transportation needs.

As baby boomers hit retirement age, the nation will see a dramatic increase in the number of seniors who need options for getting around while getting older. Arizona is one of 27 states where at least 20 percent of the population will be elderly by 2025. Council members learned that this shift could have major implications when it comes to the need for cities to plan for street, highway and pedestrian improvements. Potential considerations could include changes to signage and lighting such as luminated overhead street signs, brighter lane markings, widening of left turn lanes, the creation of “elderly pedestrian zones,” and more mixed land use with services near residences.

MAG recently completed a series of focus groups in which input was obtained from seniors, baby boomers, caregivers and agency representatives. Three forums are planned to garner additional input (see Upcoming Events, below). Once the public input activities are complete, a Regional Action Plan on Elderly Mobility will be developed.

**For more information contact Suzanne Quigley, Human Services Planner, (602) 254-6300.**



## **Upcoming Issues**

### **Regional Review of Local Plans to be Considered**

At its next meeting, the MAG Regional Council will look at a method to implement a regional review of local plans. The concept was the outgrowth of a consensus during the January Regional Council Retreat. General plans and amendments will be reviewed for their consistency with regional plans and policies adopted by MAG in areas such as transportation, air quality, open space, water quality, solid waste and human services.

**For more information contact Dennis Smith, MAG Assistant Director, (602) 254-6300.**

### **MAG Seeks Ways to Broaden Partnerships**

The Maricopa Association of Governments is pursuing ways to further engage the community in MAG – by broadening membership to include private sector representatives, expanding membership beyond Maricopa County, refining MAG's role as a regional entity, and exploring a name change to reflect this broader partnership. Initial recommendations will include adding three representatives from the business community, representing the East Valley, West Valley and Central Phoenix areas.

**For more information contact Dennis Smith, MAG Assistant Director, (602) 254-6300.**



## **Upcoming Events**

### **Focus Groups Scheduled Throughout the Valley**

As the next step in the creation of a new Regional Transportation Plan, focus groups are planned across the Valley in the coming weeks. Focus groups will be held in the Southwest Valley on May 1; Northwest Valley on May 2; East Valley on May 7; North Valley on May 8; Southeast Valley on May 14; Ahwatukee/Tempe on May 15; City of Phoenix on May 17; Gilbert and the West Valley on May 21; Southwest Phoenix on May 22; and the Northeast Valley on May 23. Additional focus groups will target agency stakeholders and freight service providers.

**For more information contact Eric Anderson, MAG Transportation Manager, (602) 254-6300.**

**Elderly Mobility Forums Scheduled**

The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) is inviting seniors and caregivers to participate in a Senior Mobility Forum called "Getting Around Safe and Sound: Planning for Improved Mobility for Older Adults in the Valley." The forum is designed as a dialogue to look at what can be done to improve the access of seniors to places they need or want to go. Two forums have already been held, the final forum will be held on Thursday, May 3rd at the Mesa Senior Center, 247 N. MacDonald, Mesa, from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

The forum will focus on how to improve transportation options for seniors, whether they are drivers, passengers or pedestrians. It is designed for older adults concerned about getting around the Valley, as well as for sons, daughters, friends, or care-givers of older adults who are concerned about a senior's transportation needs

**For more information contact Suzanne Quigley, Human Services Planner, (602) 254-6300.**

**Next Regional Council Meeting**

The next Regional Council meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 23, 2001 at 5:00 p.m. at the MAG offices, 302 N. 1st Ave., Suite 200. Agenda items are expected to include consultant selection for the Update of the Regional Aviation System Plan; MAG Continuum of Care Regional Committee on Homelessness' prioritized applications for HUD funding; update on the External Travel Survey; approval of the Unified Planning Work Program and Annual Budget; discussion of a regional review of local plans; and an update on the Regional Transportation Plan.

**For more information contact Dennis Smith, MAG Assistant Director, (602) 254-6300.**